



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Youth-Adult Partnerships

According to the University of California 4-H Youth Development Program “Youth-adult partnerships ... are youth and adults coming together in a positive, mutually respectful environment with the recognition that each group contributes unique strengths to the relationship.”

Three primary benefits of Youth-Adult Partnerships:

There are three primary benefits of Youth-Adult Partnerships. First, youth-adult partnerships create a sense of belonging as youth voices are heard, enhancing ownership and responsibility. Second, youth-adult partnerships build relationships as youth are seen as capable partners, taking active leadership roles working alongside volunteers and staff. Third, youth-adult partnerships emphasize learning by doing as youth and adults gain hands-on experience learning from each other.

Quiz time!

What are the three important reasons for youth-adult partnerships?

- A. Creates a sense of security, builds ships, emphasizes learning by doing.
- B. Creates a sense of belonging, emphasizes learning by doing.
- C. Creates a sense of belonging, builds relationships, emphasizes learning by doing.
- D. Calls a sense of beneficence, brings rationality, exports leader book documents.

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Correct answer: C. Creates a sense of belonging, builds relationships, emphasizes learning by doing.

Practicing Youth-Adult Partnerships

Youth-adult partnerships can be practiced through tailored communication, mentoring, and leadership. When practicing communication, talk with all club members and families and understand their preferred communication mode. Some may not have email, text, or social media. Be sure whatever communication strategy(ies) you use are inclusive and everyone is included. You may need more than one communication strategy! Ask youth and adults for help! When practicing mentorship, relationships should flow in both directions, a result that can be nurtured by strategies including, pairing new staff/volunteers with seasoned youth and setting measurable goals for mentorship! Ways to practice leadership include recruiting youth to lead or co-facilitate group meetings and events and hosting youth discussion panels at professional development trainings.

Quiz time!

What is the main theme in practicing youth-adult partnerships?

- A. Youth have a voice in communication, mentorship, and leadership.
- B. Youth and staff work together to foster effective communication, mentorship, and leadership.
- C. Both of the above.

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Correct answer: C. Both of the above.

The Equation for Youth-Adult Partnerships

The equation for youth-adult partnerships is as follows: youth plus staff and volunteers equals working together. Within this equation, there are actions that each group needs to take. Youth should challenge their biases, provide feedback often, think about your skill sets and abilities and where they can share them, learn from other youth and adults, make sure all voices are heard, ask questions, and share their ideas! Staff and volunteers should remember their role is as a partner, connect and engage with youth, provide opportunities for young people to lead and teach, treat youth as individuals, challenge their biases, and identify champions to advocate for and model youth-adult partnerships. By completing these actions, it produces a result where groups are working together, where they should provide choices and options for everyone to be included and involved, establish clear roles and expectations, practice patience, encourage collective mentoring (youth mentor adults, adults mentor youth), and remain thoughtful about how to advance youth-adult partnerships.

Quiz time!

What are some actions that youth and adults can take to create successful partnerships?

- A. Avoid hard conversations, only include the loudest voices, and don't listen to each other.
- B. Invest in a pet cow for the group, then get a pet cat for your pet cow.
- C. Challenge personal biases, provide feedback, make sure all voices are heard, learn from each other.

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Correct answer: C. Challenge personal biases, provide feedback, make sure all voices are heard, learn from each other.

Activities for achieving the goals of Youth-Adult Partnerships

Some examples of activities that can help achieve these goals include hosting a youth-adult social to welcome new members and get re-acquainted with returning members; conducting a brainstorming session to review goals of youth-adult partnerships and identify what it looks like in your group; creating a mission or vision statement that inspires and energizes the group to practice youth-adult partnerships, and tracking progress with regular meetings to celebrate success stories and address challenges.

Youth-Adult Partnerships Rubric Activity:

Now that you understand the basics of youth-Adult partnerships, let's take a few minutes to go through the rubric for successful youth-adult partnerships. Read the criteria for each, and recognize that a successful partnership would meet the criteria for 5 points, or almost 5 points. Consider your role in achieving that goal. Feel free to pause after each rubric item if necessary.

Dimension 1:

Authentic Decision-making—youth are involved in meaningful decision making.

Rubric Item 1.3: Youth have key leadership roles or responsibilities.

- 1 point: youth have minimal leadership roles and responsibilities. Adults are the leaders of the group.
 - During meetings: youth are only responsible for small roles and tasks.

- During activities: youth learn from adults and do not demonstrate or lead anything.
- 3 points: youth have some leadership roles and responsibilities, but they are low stake.
 - During meetings: youth act as meeting co-facilitators but only participate in note taking or rarely lead activities.
 - During activities: youth lead the ice-breaker activities, but not high-stakes activities.
- 5 points: Youth take on key leadership roles and responsibilities that further develop their skills and networks.
 - During meetings: youth act as co-facilitators and lead the discussions.
 - During activities: youth co-teach with adults and demonstrate the activities.

Rubric Item 1.4: All youth participate fully in the conversation

- 1 point: a few youth dominate the conversation and act as representing the whole group. There is little to no intention in trying to balance out unequal power among youth.
 - During meetings: only a few youth pay attention to the meeting. Facilitators do not try to engage others.
 - During activities: only a few youth are encouraged to present their work.
- 3 points: a few youth dominate the conversation. There is some intention in trying to balance out unequal power among youth, but it often fails.
 - During meetings: only a few youth pay attention to the meeting. Facilitator try to engage others but often fail.
 - During activities: all youth are encouraged to present their work, but only a few want to do so.
- 5 points: Youth take on key leadership roles and responsibilities that further develop their skills and networks.
 - During meetings: youth act as co-facilitators and lead the discussions.
 - During activities: youth co-teach with adults and demonstrate the activities.

Rubric Item 1.5: The organization's culture or by laws supports youth governance.

- 1 point: youth have no explicit roles beyond being a participant in the organization
- 3 points: youth can take on certain leadership roles in program activities, but not for the whole organization governance.
- 5 points: youth are part of the whole organization governance, as demonstrated by explicit roles they have across the organization.

Dimension 2:

Natural mentors—adults intentionally support relationships with youth to help them develop.

Rubric Item 2.3: Adults are able to work with youth to maintain an organized inclusive and collaborative environment for all.

- 1 point: chaos, disorganization or dysfunction is frequently present in the activity youth participate in.
 - During meetings: discussions get off-track. Adults are unable to work with youth to get the discussion back on track for a long time.
 - During activities: adults come disorganized or unprepared for the activity.
- 3 points: sometimes the activity seems chaotic, disorganized, or dysfunctional, but there is some support for collaboration and getting tasks accomplished
 - During meetings: discussions get off-track. Sometimes adults are able to get the discussion back on track quickly while other times it varies.
 - During activities: adults forget to bring some materials for the lesson but are able to improvise.
- 5 points: adults support an organized, inclusive and collaborative environment that helps youth work to meet their goals.
 - During meetings: discussions stay on-track with full participation. Meeting ends on time with goals accomplished.
 - During activities: youth are in good hands to complete their activity and enjoy the session.

Rubric Item 2.4: Adults are resourceful and intentional in enhancing youths' social capital.

- 1 point: Adults do not mention any resources or networks that could benefit youth.
- 3 points: adults mention resources or networks that could be beneficial to youth but lack tangible actions.
- 5 points: adults provide youth with specific contacts or information that could enhance their resources or networks.

Rubric Item 2.5: Adults are active listeners; youth reflect and develop own ideas.

- 1 point: Adults do most of the talking. Youth are constantly interrupted or have limited opportunity to share and develop their ideas.
- 3 points: Adults are intentional in letting youth talk, but still end up doing most of the talking rather than being an active listener.

- 5 points: Adults act as active listeners by giving encouragement, repeating back what they're saying, giving wait time for youth to further develop their thoughts. Adults encourage youth to reflect and develop own ideas.

Rubric Item 2.6: Adults help youth think through the complexity of issues and respect whatever conclusions youth reach.

- 1 point: Adults do not help youth think through the complexity of issues, or even if they do, they try to persuade youth what they think would be best for them to do.
- 3 points: Adults help youth think through the complexity of issues. SOmetimes they try to persuade youth what they think would be best for them to do; other times they encourage youth to reach their own conclusions.
- 5 points: Adults help youth think through the complexity of issues and make clear that they will respect whatever conclusions the youth reach.

Rubric item 2.7: Adults help youth think about goals and possibilities for the future, and identify steps to achieve them.

- 1 point: adults do not help youth think about goals or opportunities for the future.
- 3 points: adults help youth think about goals and possibilities for the future. Yet, discussion is minimal and there are no clear steps to achieve these goals.
- 5 points: adults help youth think about goals and possibilities for the future. Discussions include clear tangible steps to achieve these goals.

Rubric Item 2.8: Adults celebrate youths' progress, strengths and successes.

- 1 point: adults do not mention any progress, strengths or successes youth have achieved.
- 3 points: adults mention some progress, strengths or successes youth have achieved; but youth do not have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences.
- 5 points: adults mention some progress, strengths or successes youth have achieved. Youth are encouraged to reflect on their experiences.

Dimension 3:

Reciprocity—youth and adults work together as partners.

Rubric item 3.1: youth and adults create a mutual agenda.

- 1 point: the agenda is largely created by adults.
 - During meetings: the meeting agenda is largely created by adults.
 - During activities: Adults prepare what activities are to be delivered by youth.
- 3 points: the agenda is created by adults with minimal youth input.

- During meetings: the meeting agenda is largely created by adults but youth get to review it ahead of time for additions.
- During activities: adults prepare what activities are to be delivered to youth, but ask youth if there is anything they want to add on.
- 5 points: the agenda is co-created by youth and adults.
 - During meetings: youth and adults co-create meeting agenda ahead of time.
 - During activities: youth and adults co-prepare for the delivery of activities.

Rubric Item 3.2: youth and adults exchange ideas as supportive peers.

- 1 point: youth and adults rarely draw on each other's ideas.
- 3 points: youth and adults sometimes draw on each other's ideas but they don't genuinely integrate those ideas together.
- 5 points: youth and adults routinely seek out one another's opinion and integrate their ideas. Intergroup interactions are natural.

Rubric Item 3.3: youth and adults work collaboratively as supportive peers.

- 1 point: youth and adults tend to work separately from one another.
- 3 points: youth and adults occasionally perform tasks that involve collaboration.
- 5 points: youth and adults routinely perform tasks that involve collaboration.

Rubric item 3.4: youth and adults are co-learning partners

- 1 point: adults assume their role is to answer questions for youth or teach youth how to do their tasks.
- 3 points: adults encourage youth to share some knowledge but still think they know better and it's their role to teach youth how to do their tasks.
- 5 points: adults assume they don't have all the answers and they're willing to learn from youth or explore new possibilities with youth.

Dimension 4: Community connectedness—youth are engaged in communities.

Rubric item 4.1: youth develop a sense of community through program involvement.

- 1 point: there is little to no opportunity for youth to develop on-going relationships and connections with each other.
- 3 points: there are some opportunities for youth to develop relationships with each other, but youth do not have a sense of group membership.
- 5 points: youth identify themselves as an active member of the group or the overall program.

Rubric Item 4.2: Youth are active contributors to the community.

- 1 point: youth participate in activities beneficial to themselves.
- 3 points: youth participate in activities that benefit themselves and support the program as a whole.
- 5 points: youth participate in activities that support themselves, the program as a whole, and the external community.

Rubric Item 4.3: Youth gain essential social capital through program involvement.

- 1 point: the activities provide no opportunities for youth to engage in communities outside of the organization.
- 3 points: the activities provide youth with minimal opportunities to engage in communities outside of the organization
- 5 points: the activities provide youth with meaningful opportunities to engage in communities outside of the organization. Collaboration includes planning or working together so youth can enhance their skills or networks.

This rubric was developed by Michigan State University Outreach and Engagement, The Neutral Zone, and Heng-Chieh Jamie Wu Ph.D, John Weiss M.P.P/M.U.P, Mariah Kornbluh M.A., and Lori Roddy M.S.W

Conclusion

Pause and name three things you learned in this training...

Thank you for completing it! Now that you understand the basics of nurturing positive youth-adult partnerships as a volunteer, you can expand your understanding by applying these principles in your work! This training is always available on the Jefferson county 4-H volunteer resources page if you would like to return to it. Additional resources below.

[Link to Certificate of Completion](#)

[Youth-Adult Partnership RUBRIC | Engaged Research and Evaluation Center | University Outreach and Engagement](#)

Youth-Adult Partnerships Handout -- 4-H Wisconsin